

Newburyport  
1785

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*Mr. Spring's*  
**DISCOURSE**  
O N

*Knowing and Trusting GOD.*

W. B. King's



W. B. King's



*Christian Knowledge, and Christian  
Confidence inseparable.*

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A  
**DISCOURSE**

DELIVERED BY

**SAMUEL SPRING, A. M.**

*Pastor of the North Church in*

**NEWBURY-PORT,**

FEB. 6TH, 1785.

*Published by desire of a number of his Hearers.*

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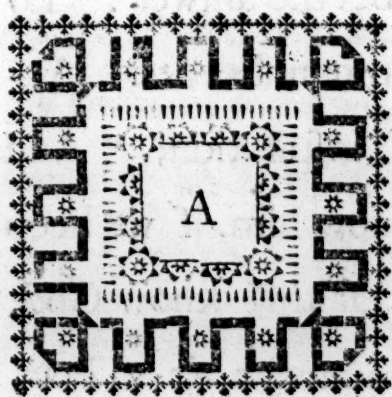




## A S E R M O N.

P S A L M IX. 10.

*They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.*



S men are prone to conclude they know God, and put their trust in him, though destitute of holiness, it is a matter of the greatest importance, to ascertain the spirit of the text. For, God not only says, ‘Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord;’ but, ‘Curst is the man whose heart departeth from him.’

LET us, therefore, first, attend to the nature of knowing God: secondly, to the nature of trusting him :

him : and thirdly, to the connexion between christian knowledge and christian confidence.

AND, let me ask you, my christian friends, to improve your humble influence at the throne of grace, that I may treat these interesting things in a manner, calculated to edify the knowing and instruct the ignorant.

FIRST, Let us attend to the nature of knowing God. What is it to know God? The question is important, and this must be the answer : To know God, is to keep his commandments. Accordingly, says the spirit of inspiration, ‘ And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know God, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.’ It is therefore obvious, as love is the sum of obedience to the divine commands, that love to God and man, is the spirit of christian knowledge. ‘ For, love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. And, he that loveth not, knoweth not God ;



God ; for God is love.' The man, therefore, who knows God, is a man of impartial benevolence. He is a new creature, and bears the image of divine benevolence upon his heart. His moral blindness is removed, and he sees God, and divine things, with the eyes of love. His sight is spiritual : and, while the natural man is morally incapable of loving the glory of God, he views it with increasing pleasure. For, the eye of benevolence is never weary of divine beauty. I beseech thee, shew me thy glory, is the constant language of his heart. When God therefore displays the riches of his wisdom, the majesty of his power and the excellency of his goodness, in the operations of Providence, his teachable soul is filled with admiration, reverence and delight. As he partakes of the divine nature ; so he possesses the divine interest, and acquaints himself with God, by the most intimate fellowship and communion. He enters into the feelings of the Father, in sending his Son to enlighten this blind and ignorant world. He enters into the spirit of the benevolent Redeemer, in descending

ascending from the throne of the universe, to assume  
 the form of a servant, and gratefully takes up the  
 cross according to his direction: He, even sym-  
 bolizes with Christ, in his sufferings and death.  
 For, he is influenced by that charity which seeketh  
 not her own. He knows Christ by copying his  
 example. For, his benevolent commands are writ-  
 ten upon his heart, and are a light to his feet, and  
 a lamp to his path. They are sweeter to him than  
 honey, or the honey comb; because, like streams,  
 they lead him directly to the fountain of endless de-  
 light. As the dutiful child knows his father by  
 seeing, and conversing freely with him every day;  
 so the child of God is acquainted with his heaven-  
 ly Father, by the constant enjoyment of his pre-  
 sence. He knows God by living near him, and  
 walking with him, in the path of duty. He knows  
 him in the evening; for, he leaves himself and all  
 things in his hand. He knows him in his closet;  
 for, he carefully converses with him by secret pray-  
 er. He is acquainted with God in the sanctuary;  
 for, he loves to wait upon him, in the dispensation  
 of



of his word, and the administration of the ordinances. He is happily acquainted with him, both in prosperity and adversity : for, his heart is formed for gratitude and submission. In a word, he knows God in eating and drinking, and all the actions of life, in proportion to his obedience ; for, God loves to manifest himself to those who love him and keep his commandments. Accordingly, says Christ to his Disciples, ‘ But ye know him, for he dwelleth in you, and shall be in you. And, he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will manifest myself unto him.’ It is, therefore, sufficiently obvious, that to know God, is to love him. It is the benevolent heart which forms a saving acquaintance with the divine character. And as those only know God at present who love him supremely ; so Christ the Judge of men’s hearts, will not know any others at the great day : but will say to all on his left hand, ‘ I never knew you, depart from me into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels.’

It therefore follows, if I have given a just view of the nature of knowing God, that the knowledge of some persons who fondly flatter themselves, they are acquainted with him, is nothing but moral ignorance. The precious fruits of saving knowledge do not hang upon every bough. They never grow upon a wild tree, though planted in the garden of the Lord. For, as is the tree, so will be the fruit. He, therefore, who remains in a state of nature, like Israel's empty vine, bringeth forth fruit only to himself. But, let us distinguish carefully; for, it is not only necessary to tell what religion is, but what it is not, that every complexion of moral ignorance may be exposed. And

*First,* It is evident from what has been said on the nature of saving knowledge, that a person may be possessed of a great degree of speculative knowledge of God, and yet not know him. Saving knowledge belongs to the heart, and not to the head. Hence, it is common to see persons of great genius and learning, reason accurately upon the nature of divine things, possessed of the most vicious



ous characters in the world. They know their Master's will and do it not, and are therefore guilty of great moral ignorance. Saving knowledge is always too high for a natural man ; for, he has no cordial relish for divine things. He sees Christ with the eye of reason, but rejects him at heart, because he has no taste for moral excellency. It is not speculative knowledge which constitutes a christian ; I have leave to say further, that it makes no part of the distinguishing character of a christian. For, we all know, that Satan is possessed of a very extensive mind, and very bad heart. The Devil knows, but does not love his Maker : and all natural men are like him, be their appearance and acquisitions what they may. But, it is needless to spend time in illustrating this proposition, that some learned characters are ignorant of God. For, inspiration expressly says, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, and not many noble are called.

*Secondly.* We are presented with the folly of those who think they are savingly acquainted with  
God

God, because they have been the subjects of a little conviction of conscience. For, if all convinced persons were the subjects of special grace, we should not see so many of them return in haste to their former courses, as a dog to his vomit, and like a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. But, that conviction is not conversion is evident from this glaring consideration, that all the reprobates will be the subjects of keen conviction at the great day. How criminally blind, therefore, are those, who conclude they are savingly acquainted with God, only because they have been the subjects of more or less conviction? And, whether we do not some of us belong to this deluded class of sinners, who mistake a little faint conviction of conscience, for the saving knowledge of the heart, is worthy of the most careful examination. For, the mistake is dangerous if not fatal. But

*Thirdly.* It does not follow, that a man knows God, because he concludes he is safe in the hand of infinite mercy and compassion. That God is merciful, no one disputes; but, that he will save those  
 who



who die in their sins, remains yet to be proved. For, when the Holy Ghost says, 'Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation,' he does not say, there will be another state of probation beyond the grave; but, an unremitting, endless state of punishment. The obvious language of the New Testament is this, that God will curse the wicked as long, as he will bless the righteous. He, therefore, who fondly flatters himself, that he shall be saved, because God will not make any of his creatures eternally miserable, has but too far embraced the delusion of those, who believe a lye, that they might be damned. But, alas! There are many, who are building upon this sandy foundation: for, they are not able to advance a single word against the righteousness of endless punishment, which does not militate against the justice of God in punishing sinners at all. For, who can tell, but an endless display of God's punitive justice, is not as necessary, as a temporal display? Let no one therefore presume, that he is savingly acquainted with God, because he has evidence, that God is merciful: for, he is as just, as he is merciful. But

*Fourthly,*

*Fourthly.* It does not follow, that a man knows God, because he thinks himself righteous. For, men are as subject to a mistake of this nature, as any other, and Satan is always ready to fix the deception. It is frequently the case, that persons think themselves to be something when they are nothing. The Jews in the time of Christ, presented a flagrant instance of this nature. They did not hesitate to call themselves the children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise. But, what was the judgment of Christ, who saw their actions and knew their hearts? He did not call them the children of God; but the children of the Devil. They concluded, that they knew God in consequence of their obedience; but, the fact was the reverse: for, they were ignorant of him, in consequence of their disobedience. Hence, said Christ, 'Ye neither know me, nor my Father: for he that is of God, heareth God's words.' They were destitute of love to God, and their knowledge therefore was nothing but ignorance. For, love is the fulfilling of the law. But

*Fifthly,*



*Fifthly.* There are others, who do not make a very obedient appearance, and have little to say in favour of their lives, who persuade themselves, they are the children of God; because they hear God say, 'Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven.' They pretend, they know the voice of God, and that it is the voice of a forgiving Father. But, what are these better than blind enthusiasts, who are prepared to give credit to any thing Satan presents? For, who has evidence of the declaration of pardon, by any resemblance of an audible voice? There are other imaginary creatures, who tell us of seeing Christ the bleeding Saviour, with their bodily eyes. I might mention others still, who in consequence of the confused images of their own minds, dream that they are converted, and wake up and believe it without any kind of ceremony. Such are the delusions of men respecting the things of religion: and, if the heart were not deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, we could not be the subjects of such gross impositions. It is, therefore, necessary that all persons of uneven tempers, and a great flow of animal affections, should be exceedingly

exceedingly careful, lest they fall into the snare of the Devil. For he loves to make men believe they are christians, when they are not ; if he cannot persuade them to adopt any thing more fatal to their souls.

BUT, I have only time to say, it is not the exercise of the head ; it is not the exercise of animal affections ; it is not any exercise of the natural man ; it is not any knowledge or operation of his, which constitutes an acquaintance with God. For, though a man were possessed of the mind of an Angel, and should appear to be perfectly holy, he would be a stranger to God, if destitute of that charity which seeketh not her own. He would be nothing. Hence, says the Apostle, ‘ Who had drawn the thread of external obedience without love, to a great length : ’ Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels ; though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge ; and, though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor ; and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me



me nothing. It is, therefore, a great thing to know God; for, it is a great thing to be like him. How many knowing, ignorant creatures are there then in the world! But

SECONDLY, Let us attend to the nature of trusting in the Lord. As trusting God in an exercise of heart, which is peculiar to those who are acquainted with him by impartial love, I hope no one will hastily discard the following description, in consequence of its crossing the feelings of selfish men. For, if natural men were not heartily opposed to gospel faith, the necessity of regeneration, would be entirely precluded. Let me, therefore, just premise, that it is not the groundless confidence of those, who suppose that the happiness of man, was God's principal end in his creation; it is not the confidence of Arians, Socinians, nor Universalists; nor is it any selfish confidence whatever, which I intend to delineate; but, the confidence of impartial men, who love God, because he is infinitely perfect, and made and governs all things for the manifestation of his perfections. For, he

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who cannot confide in God, because he made all things for himself, even the wicked, for the day of evil, is destitute of a christian spirit. He has not the spirit of Christ, and, is therefore, none of his. Let me, therefore observe,

*First,* The person who trusts in God, is cordially willing to be entirely dependent on him. That, we are wholly dependent on God, no one can modestly dispute. For, inspiration says, ‘In him we live and move, and have our being, that in him are all our ways, and without him we can do nothing.’ Who, therefore, can put his trust in God, while averse from a state of dependence? For, christian confidence is not any thing of an impulsive nature. He who obediently confides in God, acts freely. It is his choice to depend on his Maker, as it is the choice of a little child, to be carried in the arms of a tender parent. Both are dependent, and both choose to remain so. Those, therefore, who aspire after independence, and feel averse from being in the hand of God, are equally averse from confiding in him. But, this is the temper of all natural men;  
for,



for, pride is a moral disorder, which universally prevails, from the highest ranks and denominations of men, to the lowest. The rich are often haughty and regardless of the poor, though they are as dependent on God, as the worms under their feet. They almost forget that they are creatures, and that dust is their original. The poor are as frequently envious, and full of complaints. They are not contented with the disposals of Providence. All natural men would, if possible, escape a state of dependence. Hence, they say unto God, 'Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' They charge God with being a hard master, and call his ways unjust. Since, therefore, riches and poverty, sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, life and death and all circumstances which attend us, are under the direction of God, it is impossible for us to confide in him, but only in proportion to our being pleased with a state of entire dependence. If our dependence is grateful, our confidence will be unshaken. But, if not, we shall be as loth to trust God (when we do not see the event) as a malefactor is to trust his Judge, when he has the power of

life

life and death in his hand. No man loves to trust God, who does not love to be dependent ; but he who is pleased with his dependence, will confide in him with all his heart, and is always thankful that he has the opportunity. But

*Secondly,* To trust God, implies the most genuine repentance for all our criminality. We are moral agents. The inspiration of the Almighty has given us understanding, and freedom. We were designed for the noble service, and the sublime enjoyment of our Maker. But alas ! What have we done ? Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth ! For, we have sinned against the greatest and best of Beings ! We have violated God's laws, and despised the rectitude of his administrations. We therefore, deserve nothing except his endless wrath, and curse. But, this is not the measure of our guilt. For, as though it were not enough, to sin against the Parent of all good, we have added sin to sin, in the most daring manner, by slighting the blessed Saviour. Like the impious Jews, who partook of all previous defilement, in the crucifixion of



of Christ, we have voluntarily made their sin our own, by treading upon the precious blood of atonement, which they spilt. For, we are guilty of the aggravated sin of unbelief. Christ has called, and we have wilfully stopped our ears. He has offered us eternal life without money and without price, and we have repeatedly rejected it. We have resisted and grieved the Holy Spirit. We have dealt cruelly with our own souls, and the souls of others. For, in neglecting the great salvation, we have set the most pernicious example. In a word, we can only estimate our guilt, by the good we have opposed. But, we have opposed the glory of God in the prosperity of Christ's kingdom. Yet, blessed be God, notwithstanding our iniquities are infinite, and infinitely aggravated, we are invited to trust in him for mercy. And who can now cast himself upon divine Mercy, without a penitent, humble heart? Who can come to God, without he turns from sin? Shall the Prodigal who left his Father's house in the most undutiful manner, still continue impenitent? Shall he still grieve, and dishonour his Father, and destroy himself? No: let it never  
be

be mentioned. Let him repent ; let him come to himself ; let him be deeply humbled for his offence ; let him return to his Father's endearing arms, and waiting table, where there is love, pardon and plenty. Let him come and confess his sins ; for his Father will run to meet him, and embrace him with a flood of tears. And thus, my hearers, we must do, or we shall not put our trust in God. We must return to God, by the most sincere repentance before we can trust him. We shall never trust God, while going from him. We must come to ourselves, or we shall not come to God with christian confidence. For, God has no communion with the departing sinner. Let, therefore, the humble, and penitent examples of the Prodigal and Publican, inspire all ignorant, and distracted sinners, to come with bleeding hearts, and cast themselves upon the mercy of God. For, THAT man only who is penitently, and unfeignedly sick of sin, will properly apply to the Physician of Souls for healing mercy, and confide in his skill. No one can trust in God to be saved from sin, before he heartily repents, that he is a sinner. For,

before



before a person repents of sin, he does not desire to be saved from it, but only for the sake of escaping the penalty of the law. Cordial repentance is, therefore, always implied, in christian confidence. But

*Thirdly,* Trusting in the Lord, implies entire submission to his will. For, God is a Sovereign. By the sovereignty of God, is not meant, if the observation be necessary, that he is a capricious, unreasonable being. For, the thought is not admissible, that he ever acts but under the guidance of infinite wisdom, and the influence of infinite goodness. But, by the divine sovereignty, is meant, that God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. He does not ask angels, nor men, what is best to be done, in heaven or earth: but, in consequence of the infinite perfection of his nature, governs all things in the universe, according to his own pleasure. He, therefore, who cannot submit to the sovereign will of God, as expressed in his word, and explained in his Providences, is destitute of christian confidence. For, Christ who

is

is the standard of all christian exercises, came not to do his own, but the will of his Father who sent him, and finish his work. Those, therefore, who copy his confidence, will more or less imitate his submission, to the divine will: and, he who possesses the greatest submission, will also possess the highest confidence.

BUT, that trusting in God implies submission to his will, is evident from this consideration, that his sovereign pleasure, is the only foundation of hope. As the stream depends upon the fountain; so we depend entirely upon the divine pleasure, for every favour we enjoy. We possess just what God pleases to give us, and no more: and, as he does his pleasure with us now, so he will hereafter. But, who knows the next event? Who knows, what a day or an hour may bring forth? Does the husbandman know, when he sows his seed, whether it will produce a crop? Does the merchant know when he sends his vessel to sea, whether she will make a prosperous voyage? Does the man of affluence know, that his interest will be safe, at any future



future period ? Who knows, that his children will escape the flames this night ? And do any of us know, that we shall live another day, or hour ? No : we have no knowledge of futurity at all. We are alike ignorant of what is to come. What then shall we do ? Must we trust God in the dark ? Let us trust a kind Providence, is the united voice. But, what do we mean by trusting Providence ? Shall we leave ourselves, and all we possess in the hand of God voluntarily, or because we are compelled to it, and cannot do otherwise ? The answer is ready ; we must do it voluntarily : for, christian confidence is not any thing of an impulsive nature. No man acts more freely than the submissive christian, who in imitation of Christ, says, ' Let the will of the Lord be done.'

BUT, this presents a trial. For, some persons are called by the messenger of death, to depart, who have no evidence, that they are prepared to die. The question is, therefore, this ; what shall they do at this serious moment ? Is it duty to trust in God, or not ? Every one says, it is duty to trust

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God,

God. But, let us be careful in what we advance; that nothing need be recalled. The question returns, how ought a dying man to feel, who has no evidence that he is a christian? Shall he trust God? Shall he commit himself to his Maker? All say yes. But, is it his duty to leave his soul in the hand of God with submission, or without submission? Or is it best to be stupid? No one will say it is best to be stupid, or refractory. The consequence is then plain, that it is his duty to leave his soul submissively with God, who hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth. For, thus saith the Lord: 'Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour. And, who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?' Is not this, therefore, the language of a good man, who does not think he is a christian, while going out of time into eternity? Will he not feel in this manner?

'O Lord, I am thy creature. Thou hast made me for thy glory; and furnished me with abilities,  
for



for the noble services and enjoyments of religion. But, I have not answered the end of my creation. I have sinned against my Maker, and deserve nothing, but endless destruction. And, should thy wrath wax hot against me, and instantly separate me from all good to all evil, thy throne would be guiltless. To thee, therefore, at this solemn moment, I commit my eternal all. To thy sovereign disposal, I unreservedly resign this immortal spirit. As I have not served thee here, thou hast an unlimited right to make me the monument of thy just displeasure forever. If I am saved, I shall be thankful; and, if I am lost, I cannot but be submissive. For, thy justice must be honoured, as well as thy mercy. Here Lord, I am a dying, sinful creature; and as I cannot claim any blessing, and deserve nothing but the dreadful curse, to thy infinite justice I now submit. But, O gracious God, be merciful to a poor sinner, for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has honoured thy justice more upon the cross, than I can honour it in hell forever. As Christ lives, let me live also, and the glory shall be thine. But THY WILL BE DONE for thou art GOD: and if I perish, I perish!

Is this, my hearers, too much for a man to say, as he leaves the world, who does not indulge the thought, that he is a christian? Is this the language of submissive confidence, or not? Judge ye. You will hardly say it is not. For, he who cannot trust God in this manner, will depart from him, because there is no other alternative. Let us, therefore, remember, that as a man ought to trust God with every one of his fellow-creatures, whom he is bound to love as another self, though he knows not who will be saved, and who lost, that it is equally proper to leave himself with God, notwithstanding he has no evidence of his own safety. Let this truth also have its due weight now upon our minds, that the man who can properly leave the human race in the hand of God, can certainly trust God with his own threatening case, even in the shadow of death. For, to commit one soul to God, does not require more confidence in him, than to commit millions: and, he who is more concerned for himself, than he is for the souls of his children, and the souls of the great family of mankind, is destitute of benevolent concern. For, we are commanded to feel like God,  
 who



who loves all souls more than one, because they are more valuable.

BUT, to return; it is evident, that the most unreserved submission, is inseparably blended with christian confidence, as every advanced christian knows by happy experience. For, though a christian be possessed of unwavering assurance, he is more or less happy, in the enjoyment of God, in proportion to his submissive confidence. When he feels himself lost in contemplating the divine glory, as a ray of light is lost in the centre of the sun, and a particle of water in the midst of the ocean; then he is the happy man. But

*Fourthly,* Trusting in God, implies the most unfeigned gratitude for his boundless mercy, which constantly attends us. It was the self-moving mercy of God, which originated the gracious thought of man's redemption. It was the mercy of God which opened the bosom of divine love, for the mission of Christ to this depraved world. It was the fulness of mercy, which induced the Saviour, to  
come

come from heaven to earth, and clothe himself in human form. It was eternal grace, which led him through those unexampled scenes of reproach, and suffering, from the manger to the tomb. It is God's mercy which saves us from death ; which makes the offer of life ; which strives with sinners, which convinces them, and forms their hearts for Christ, and eternal glory. In a word ; we are indebted to divine mercy, for all our past and present enjoyments, and for all our reasonable expectations of futurity. Who, then can put his trust in God, without the deepest gratitude of heart ? Who, can think of increasing his infinite debt, by christian confidence, without the most grateful ascriptions ? Accordingly, says the good man, ' I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. For, his mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.' The christian loves the weight of gracious obligations. But

*Fifthly,* Trusting in God, implies unremitting obedience to the divine commands. That, God made us for vigilance and activity, is as evident, as, that



that he made the sun to give us light. His commands, therefore, since we are ignorant creatures, are always necessary, to lead us into the paths of pious confidence. Natural things are happily emblematical of moral : and, as a temperate use of food is necessary to the preservation of life : as sowing is necessary to reaping ; and, as the diligent hand maketh rich ; so, for a man to be rich in faith, he must be rich in good works. For, faith worketh by love : and, as the body without the spirit is dead ; so faith without works is dead. Means, and ends are inseparably connected : and, no man may expect the latter, without the most diligent use of the former. For instance ; he who neglects his closet, may not expect the blessings which are granted in answer to secret prayer. He who neglects his Bible, and the house of God, has nothing to expect, but ignorance instead of instruction. And, how can he who turns his back from month to month, and from year to year upon the table of the Lord, reap the advantage of christian fellowship and communion ? In a word ; he who neglects to draw near God according to his appointments, may  
take

take it for granted, that God will neglect him, and treat him with great displeasure. We must, therefore, sow the seeds of christian confidence both morning and evening, and at all times of the day, by strict obedience to the divine command. The pearl of great price cannot be obtained by indolence; but we must seek it as silver, and search for it as for hidden treasure. We must be as diligent to secure eternal riches, as men generally are to secure temporal riches. Like Christ, who spent all his time in doing good, and was not a stranger to midnight prayer; so, we must watch and pray and redeem the time, because the days are evil. As God himself makes use of means to accomplish his great design, we must improve all the means of grace, by waiting on him in the path of obedience to his commands: for, we shall not find him any where else. For, while he clothes the diligent christian with the garments of salvation, and fills his heart with the most unshaken confidence, he has nothing for the idle soul, but poverty, trembling and destruction. Let us, therefore, not mistake sinful ease for obedient confidence: for, they are as directly opposed



opposed to each other, as light and darknes. Nor let us expect christian confidence while destitute of christian obedience. For, it is more absurd, than to expect the continuance of health; without making use of the means of life. Let us, therefore, act like men. Let us keep pace with time : and do the things of the day while it lasts ; for the night of death is at hand. But

THIRDLY, Let us attend to the connexion between knowing God, and trusting him. For, the text presents such a connexion, and it is our business to establish, and illustrate it.

*First,* Those who know God will put their trust in him, because christian knowledge and christian confidence are inseparably related. As christian knowledge consists in loving God supremely, it necessarily leads to the most entire confidence in him. There is nothing more natural, than for persons to confide in those they love and esteem. The dutiful child confides in his father, because he loves him. The obedient subject puts confidence in his ruler, because he is pleased with his character.

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Thus, the good man is disposed to confide in his Maker, because he loves him with all his heart. As the stream which is derived from the sea, naturally recurs to it again ; so true love has no rest, but in God the original fountain of all delight. Hence, says the faithful soul, ‘ My meditation of him shall be sweet : for, he is altogether lovely. By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth : I found him ; I held him and would not let him go. For, my help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.’ But, this leads to say,

*Secondly,* That those who know God, will confide in him, because he is infinitely worthy of their highest confidence. God is perfect in his nature, and administrations. He is infinitely wise, to discern what is best ; he is infinitely good, to choose what is best, and he is infinitely powerful. He must, therefore, from the infinite perfection of his nature, adopt and execute the best possible plan. Those, therefore, who have any proper acquaintance with the consummate excellency of his character, must necessarily



necessarily trust him without reserve. For, he is a  
 light to those who are involved in darkness. Hence,  
 says the spirit, 'Who is among you that feareth  
 the Lord, that walketh in darkness, and hath no  
 light; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and  
 stay upon his God.' He is also strength to the  
 weak, and loves to make his strength perfect, in  
 granting them seasonable support. Therefore, he  
 says to his feeble children: 'Fear not, for, I am  
 with thee; be not dismayed; for, I am thy God:  
 I will strengthen thee, yea, I will uphold thee with  
 the right hand of my righteousness.' God is also  
 the best comfort, and consolation to all his discon-  
 solate children. Therefore, says the blessed Re-  
 deemer: For, the spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
 because he hath sent me to bind up the broken  
 hearted; to comfort all that mourn; to give them  
 beauty for ashes; the oil of joy for mourning, and  
 the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' In  
 a word, God is every thing to those who love him,  
 that boundless perfection can communicate. He  
 feeds the hungry, clothes the naked, enlightens the  
 blind, he delivers the tempted, supports the dying,  
 and

and carries their souls safely through the dark valley of the shadow of death into the realms of light, and endless joy. He never has, he never will forsake his friends. For, as a father pitieth his children ; so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. It is impossible, therefore, but those who are savingly acquainted with his eternal, immutable, all perfect character, should trust him. They will trust God with their silver and gold, their houses and lands, and all their temporal interests, because they are his property, and he has a perfect right to dispose of them, to the honour of his great name. They chuse that God should give them more or less health, as he sees fit ; that he should set the bounds of life, and order all the circumstances of death. They possess nothing, not excepting their immortal souls, but they freely commit to him ; because he is infinitely perfect. And who are so happy as those who can thus confide in God ? For they have nothing, and yet they possess all things in the best sense, because the height of possession, is enjoyment. But

*Thirdly,*



*Thirdly,* That those who know God, will trust him, is evident from fact. Noah spent his estate in building the ark, and then went into it with his family, because he knew God. Abraham trusted God, when he was called from his native land; when God promised him a son under all the forbidding circumstances of old age; for he was acquainted with divine faithfulness. Nor, was his confidence less tried, nor manifested in making preparations for that solemn sacrifice. Similar confidence was displayed in Job, when he said ‘The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord: and, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.’ The temper of Eli, when he was told that God designed to destroy his children, is not less notable: for, he said, ‘It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.’ David also says, ‘If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me his habitation; but, if he say I have no pleasure in thee, behold, here I am, let him do to me as seemeth good to him.’ At another time of great trial, he chose to fall into the hand of the Lord, because his mercies

cies were great. And, how gloriously did the three worthies maintain their confidence in God, when to that aspiring monarch, who attempted to compel them to idolatry by his flaming command, they calmly replied, ‘ If it be so, our God whom we serve will deliver us out of the burning, fiery furnace ; and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king.’ I might easily descend to the Prophets and Apostles, who were confident in consequence of their acquaintance with the divine character, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any thing in the universe, could separate them from the love of God. But, it is needless. For these instances of pious confidence are sufficient to shew us, that those who know God, will put their trust in him, because he is infinitely perfect. But, let us reflect upon what we have passed over, and derive all the instruction, reproof and consolation we are able.

*First,* If, I have given a proper view of the nature of trusting in God, it is evident, that many  
persons



persons have very false and dangerous notions of christian confidence. The idle man who neither plows nor sows, often speaks of trusting Providence for his daily bread. The thoughtless sinner, who neither reads nor prays, and the formal hypocrite, who does nothing in faith, both talk of trusting in God for the salvation of their souls. But, what, alas, is this but glaring presumption, instead of christian confidence? What is it but tempting God, instead of confiding in him? Yet, we often hear the most careless sinners make use of the same language upon their dying beds. It is, indeed, a rare thing, to find one of these careless or formal creatures without his blind confidence, at a dying moment. They generally say, that they put their trust in God. But, what is their confidence better than compulsion? It is not certainly, voluntary confidence: for, if it were, they would be penitent, humble, and submissive. They would not be strangers to christian experience: but, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would speak. They would not be dumb, lest they expose themselves. They would not be vainly talkative; and

and recount their good actions. They would not be distracted with fear, nor tormented before the time. But, they would express the humble and penitent, the believing and submissive feelings of their souls, in the most artless manner. We may, therefore, take it for granted, that both the thoughtless sinner, and the unfeeling formalist, are as often deceived, as they entertain hopes of their trusting God. For christian confidence is the fruit of a holy, and submissive life. But

*Secondly,* Does not the subject expose the confidence of others, who fondly expect to be noticed as the most lively christians? For, if men were sincere in their professions of trusting God in times of prosperity, they would reap the submissive fruits of it, in times of adversity. The yoke of affection would lie easy upon their necks. They would be willing to be advised, and instructed by a child. They would receive chastisement with meekness, and not suffer a single complaint to escape their lips, or lodge in their hearts. For, those who are acquainted with the secret of referring every thing  
to



to God; are prepared to see him smile, or frown, to continue life, or cut it short, according to his own pleasure. God's will is their will, and his pleasure is theirs'. They, therefore, rejoice in prosperity without being elated, and mourn in adversity without being dejected. When God gives, they are thankful; and when he takes away, they are submissive. For, they are godly and contented. Whose confidence, therefore, will bear an impartial examination? For, how often do men desire favours without submission, and receive them without gratitude? How often does prosperity make them proud and vain, and, how frequently does adversity make them refractory and discontented? Since, therefore, men do not trust God, any further than they submit to his will; have we not great reason to fear, that many confident persons never trusted the Lord at all? I judge no man; but, let the tree be distinguished by its fruit. Let us, therefore,

*Thirdly,* Examine ourselves by the truths which have been presented, while they are fresh in mind.

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And,

And, let us do it without partiality, and without hypocrisy. For, we shall soon be examined, by the most strict and impartial Judge. Do we know God? I do not ask, whether we know him with our heads: for the devils know him in this manner. But, the serious question is this; do we know him with our hearts? If you answer yes; let me ask further. Are you the subjects of the new birth? Are you new creatures? Have old things passed away, and have all things become new? Is your love impartial? Are you under the influence of that charity which seeketh not her own? Can you say from heart-felt experience, that you love God more than every thing beside, and that you make his honour the great end of your actions? Will your lives, when impartially surveyed, prove that you have made the divine commands the rule of your conduct? Do your closets bear testimony in favour of your humble, and penitent prayers? Does Christ know, that you have cordially symbolized with him at his table, or that you have sincerely desired it? And do our neighbours know, that we have loved them as ourselves? Do we keep  
conscience



conscience void of offence in the gospel sense ? If we can answer these questions in the affirmative, we are savingly acquainted with God. But, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things. But, since those who know God will put their trust in him, let me ask whether you are possessed of christian confidence ? I do not ask, whether you enjoy, or expect those favours only, which God pleases to communicate ; for, you cannot alter God's purposes ; but, whether your hearts harmonize with the divine disposals ? Can you say, let the will of the Lord be done ? Are you cordially willing, that God should order all your present and future circumstances, of every nature, according to his own pleasure ? Do you feel disposed to trust him with your bodies and souls, for time and eternity ? If not, how can you help yourselves ? For, God's pleasure will be done whether you submit or not : and where is your religion ? For that man only is a christian, who finds his pleasure in the pleasure of God. But, let me ask again ; are you pleased with your dependence ? Are you penitent for your sins ? Are you humble

in prosperity, and submissive in adversity? If so, you have reason to rejoice: but, if you are uneasy with your circumstances; if you are proud when you prosper, and refractory when you are afflicted and disappointed, you have reason to fear: for, your religion is vain. Let us, therefore, search and try our ways, that we may be seasonably prepared for that future trial which is just at hand. But

*Fourthly,* Let the subject be improved to the consolation of all disconsolate christians.

#### DEARLY BELOVED,

WHILE you mourn for sin, let not your hearts be discouraged; but trust in the Lord; for, in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. You have leave to mourn since you have sinned, but not without hope. For, the Lord reigns to accomplish the desire of his friends. Lift up your heads then, and rejoice, for your redemption draweth nigh. He who made the heavens and earth, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, will soon enlighten your darkness, and crown you with eternal life.



life. Christ will not leave you comfortless; and as you sow in tears you will reap in joy. Like pure gold, you will presently come out of the furnace of affliction, prepared for the kingdom of glory. Your state of tribulation is short, but the glory which follows will last forever. Remember that Christ was made perfect through suffering, and that the most fiery trial is the lot of his followers. Be submissive, therefore, and let patience have her perfect work. For, God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted, above what you are able to bear. Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For, yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come and will not tarry.

To conclude; let me address a word to those who know not God, and are destitute of confidence in the Almighty.

MY FELLOW MORTALS,

THE period, the solemn period must soon arrive, when you will find the necessity of christian confidence.

confidence. Our lives are short, and short will be the slumber of these mortal bodies in the grave. The Lord will come, and he will come with infinite majesty, and vengeance. At the voice of the Arch-Angel, and the trump of God, the earth and seas must give up their scattered dead. You, and I, and all must hear the commanding sound, and come forth; those that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation. We shall soon see the Judge descend in flaming fire, and take his awful seat. Saints will rejoice, and sinners tremble. For, Christ will call the universe before his bar, to reward his friends with everlasting life, and punish those that know not God, with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Acquaint then yourselves now with God, and put your trust in everlasting strength. For, now is the accepted time. Be wise therefore to day, lest folly prove your eternal ruin.

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